Vol. VII. Numb. 20

THE OBSERVATOR.

Remarks on the illegal Proceedings of some People about Elections for next Parliament. A Letter from Rygate, *in* Surry, *on that Subject. The Dignity of Electors and Parliament-men. A farther Account of the tacking Priest, and his Associates, in the* South *of* Purbeck, *who rioted on the last Fast-Day. The Advice of tacking Priests not to be follow'd in Elections. The Care our Ancestors took to preserve their Freedom of Elections.*

From Wednesday, April 21. to Saturday, April 24. 1708.

Obs. WHAT are the People doing about the Elections for next Parliament, *Roger?*

Country-m. Why, Master, the Member-makers are following their old Trade; that is to say, they are using their utmost Endeavours to get Men chosen, according to the several Factions with which they rank themselves; but there are too few, (for any Thing I can find) who consider the Honesty and Capacity of the Men they propose. There are some again, who would be Members, that huff and hector the People, and threaten to ruin them in their Way of Business, if they don't give them their Votes. There's a Letter for you, Master, from *Rygate*, in *Surry*, complaining of Practices of that Nature.

Obs. Pray read it, *Roger.*

Country-m. It is thus, Master:

Rygate, in *Surry*, *April* 19. 1708.

'- - - - - - - - - - sets up in this Town for Member of Parliament. Pray give us your Opinion, 'if we be not in the Right to oppose him, for he 'has been lately - - - - -.

Obs. Hold, hold, *Roger*, enough, we must avoid personal Reflections. These Gentlemen need not ask the Question, if they be in the Right to oppose him, or any other: For 'tis the undoubted Right of all Electors, by our Constitution, to oppose and chuse whom they please; and if the Person they describe, has been guilty of the Things they alledge, tho' he should carry the Election by those Means they say he makes Use of, we have Reason to hope, the next Committee of Elections will do them Justice upon Complaint, if they be able to make out their Allegations. 'Tis the Concern of all Electors, to stand by their Priviledges; and for such Gentlemen as use indirect Methods, by huffing and bouncing, *&c.* I would put them in Mind of Mr. *Blyth*, Mayor of *Norwich*, who was sent for into Custody in *December*, 1705. for publishing an obsolete By-Law of that Corporation, made in 1640. to terrify the Electors from free and impartial Voting for Members. In the mean Time, the Electors at *Rygate*, who say they are for the present Government, and against the Pretender, do well to oppose any Man, who they think is of contrary Principles; and they are in the Right to desire, that such *Londoners*, or others, who have Free-holds there, (but they know not how to send to them) should come down in Time, to join in opposing any such Person, and to vote for that Gentleman, who they say is firm to our Constitution, and the present Government; and that he and his Ancestors have been noted for their being well acquainted with our Constitution, and vigorous Asserters of it.

Country-m. I don't see, Master, how our *Londoners*, or others, who have a Right to vote any where, can answer it to God and their Country, if they neglect, at such a Juncture as this, to go and vote for such Men *as fear God, and hate Covetousness.* These are the Qualifications the Divine Wisdom requires in all Magistrates, and particularly in those, who have a Right to make Laws for others, since that makes them a Part of the supreme Magistracy.

Obs. I wish, *Roger*, all those, who set up for Members of Parliament, would consider the Dignity and Nature of the Office; and what a dreadful Guilt they bring upon themselves, both with Respect to God, and their Country, if they don't perform their Duty as they ought, when they are chosen. If they consider'd this, *Roger*, they would not so far debase themselves, as to vote for a Prospect of Places or Pensions, or follow the Leaders of the several Parties blindfold, with their Yeas and Noes. This holds likewise, *Roger*, with Respect to the Electors themselves; for anciently they were our Legislators, but growing so numerous, that it was not practicable for them to come in Person, they chose others to represent them; and those Representatives derive their Right of Legislature solely from them. Now, *Roger*, did our Electors weigh this duly, they would consider the Dignity of that Priviledge, which our Constitution vests them with, and never be so mean or base, as to suffer themselves to be hector'd out of their Votes, much less to sell them for any Consideration whatever, as too many miserable Wretches do meerly for a Belly-full of Liquor. And hence it comes to pass, that such Candidates as tap the Barrel at both Ends, so frequently carry it from those, who either are not able to treat the Electors at that extravagant Rate, or hate to purchase the Priviledge of being Members, which requires Men of the utmost Capacity and Sobriety, by making the Electors drunk.

Country-m. You say very well, Master: For my Part, I tell all my honest Country Neighbours, that I will never vote for any Man, who is not a Person of known Probity and Ability; and that I would avoid, as a Plague, such Men as live in open Rebellion to the Laws of God: For I am sure, we have no Reason to expect, that such Persons, commonly speaking, will ever promote good Laws for their Country. For Instance, Master, if I knew any Man set up as a Candidate, who had sent Horses or Wooll, *&c.* over to *France*, I should have Reason to suspect, that he would be for bringing the Pretender from thence; or if any Man were propos'd to be chosen, who had attempted to cut his own Throat, I should be afraid, if he came into the House, he would do what he could to cut the Throat of our Constitution.

Obs. You argue very justly, *Roger.* But what's that in your Hand?

Country-m. It's a Paper, Master, left with me some Time ago, by an honest Country Gentleman, relating to the tacking Priest in the *South* Part of *Purbeck*; who, as I brought you an Account formerly, did with some of his Neighbours of the same Kidney, instead of humbling themselves before God, as Authority commanded, go and make a Debauch on the Fast-day. The Gentleman told me, Master, they were so far from looking upon this as a Crime, or being asham'd of it, that they rail'd at, and abus'd several Gentlemen, who they suppos'd (but falsly) had sent you Notice of it. The Gentleman told me, he was in Hopes they would reform upon such a publick Rebuke, and do Justice to the Gentlemen they had abus'd; and therefore desir'd me to forbear saying any Thing farther

farther to you about it, 'till I heard from him: But now he ſends me Word, that they are more and more harden'd in their Wickedneſs, and deſires me to tell you a great deal more about it: Some of the Particulars are, that the Vicar ſpent the Faſt-Day in the Morning in buying Casks of wreck'd Wine from ſome Country-men, who, after they receiv'd their Money, went to a Debauch at an unlicens'd Ale-houſe, where they ſent for a Fidler; and having fuddl'd themſelves ſo as they car'd no more for Muſick, the Fidler went afterwards to the Vicar, and his Company, at another Houſe, where their Drinking-Match continu'd 'till next Morning: And here, Maſter, are the Names of both the Companies.

Obſ. No Names, *Roger*, at preſent; 'twill be Time enough when they put us to the Proof of it. They are very well known in the Country, I perceive; and I hope, no honeſt Man will be influenc'd to vote at Elections in thoſe, or any other Parts of the Kingdom, by ſuch tacking Prieſts, and thoſe who adhere to them.

Country-m. You will find more Reaſon to ſay ſo, Maſter, when I tell you, that during the Pretender's Attempt to invade us, that tacking Prieſt, as well as others elſewhere, expreſs'd themſelves to this Effect, that they did not care what Government we were under, provided we were rid of the preſent Government: And yet, Maſter, this Vicar has not only got off his firſt Fruits and Tenths, but he has been poſſeſs'd of two Benefices for ſeveral Years, and is now about a Diſpenſation to get Inſtitution for a third of 70 *l. per Ann.* or better; whereas, at the ſame Time, he gives a very ſcandalous Allowance to an honeſt and learned Gentleman, who preaches for him at the Vicaridge, tho' he has a Wife, and ſeven or eight ſmall Children to maintain.

Obſ. I hope his Dioceſan will enquire into that, *Roger*: Thoſe Pluralities have been a long Time complain'd of; but when we ſhall have a Redreſs, God knows. Enough of this Subject at once, *Roger*, let's return to the Buſineſs of Elections.

Country-m. With all my Heart, Maſter; for that is now the moſt neceſſary Subject; therefore pray give your Opinion freely about it: For I pity the Condition of our Electors, and particularly thoſe at *Rygate*, who are threaten'd on the one Hand by a certain Perſon, that if they don't chuſe him, he will hinder them in their Buſineſs; and on the other Hand, they are threaten'd by their Neighbours in the Country, that if they do chuſe him, they will look upon them as Rebels, and lay out no Money with them.

Obſ. Threats, and ſuch indirect Practices on either Side, are unjuſt, *Roger*, and tend to ſubvert our Conſtitution; for if we muſt be over-aw'd in our Choice, 'tis the ſame Thing as if we had no Choice at all: Therefore, *Roger*, I think I can give our Electors no better Advice, than to remind them of what I quoted before, from the Parliament-Rolls of 1 *Hen.* 4. *m.* 20. concerning *Richard* the II. *viz.*

'Altho' by Statute, and the Cuſtom of his Realm, 'in the calling of every Parliament, his People, in 'every County of *England*, ought to be free to 'chuſe and depute Knights for the ſaid Counties, 'to be preſent in Parliament, and to *lay open their* 'Grievances, *and to proſecute for Remedies thereupon,* 'as they think fit; notwithſtanding the ſaid King, 'that in his Parliament he might obtain his Will, 'which was raſh, often directed his Mandates to 'his Sherriffs, that they ſhould return certain Perſons nominated by the King himſelf, as Knights 'of the Shires; which Knights indeed he could 'make pliable to him, and as he very often did, 'ſometimes by various Threats and Terrors, and 'ſometimes by Gifts, to conſent to thoſe Things 'which were prejudicial to the Realm, and extreamly burtheniſome to the People; and particularly to grant the ſame King the Subſidy of Wooll, 'during his Life, and another Subſidy for certain 'Years, thereby too much oppreſſing his People.

Now, *Roger*, you may ſee by this Article againſt *Richard* the II. our Conſtitution allows neither Threats, Promiſes, or Bribes in the Prince, to influence Elections, and much leſs in any Subject; that our Anceſtors would not have Courtiers or others impos'd upon them, as their Repreſentatives; and that they enquir'd into *Grievances, and proſecuted for ſuch Remedies as they thought fit*. So that if we don't follow the ſame Methods, we declare our Selves unworthy of our brave Anceſtors, and betray our Selves and our Poſterity. Thoſe Gallant Men were always for keeping clear Marches betwixt the legiſlative and executive Power; for they knew our Liberties muſt be ſwallow'd up, if they ſuffer'd Princes to influence the Elections of Parliament-men; and yet, *Roger*, we find too many of thoſe who profane the glorious Name of Whigs, or Revolution-men, by aſſuming it to themſelves, fall in with the old Tory Principles and Practices of reviling ſuch worthy Patriots, as at any Time are for enquiring into Grievances, and redreſſing them. Theſe they unjuſtly call Tories, and diſaffected Perſons, tho' it be evident, from the Nature of the Thing, that they are the moſt faithful Subjects, who endeavour to prevent or redreſs ſuch Things as have ever prov'd fatal to former Princes, who either encourag'd or conniv'd at them.

Country-m. Then, Maſter, I hope, in the approaching Election, our Electors will not be miſled by Names, but conſider Things, and look upon ſuch Men as the fitteſt to repreſent them, who are known to be firm to our Conſtitution, and the *Hannover* Succeſſion; tho' ſome of them may have been unjuſtly reproach'd with the Name of Tory, when it was evident they acted in Parliament according to the fundamental Principles of our Liberty. But I muſt deſire your farther Advice to our Electors in our next, Maſter.

Advertiſements.

Theſe are to give Notice,

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